

## VIII

## THE PLANT EMBLEM

*The Nature of the Heratu*

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192 THE clan has a distinctive emblem or associate. Among the Aiga tribe (of whom my information is the fullest) this is called the *beratu*, and throughout the remainder of this chapter the word *beratu* will be used as the equivalent of plant-emblem. *Kenatu* is the form in the Binandele and Tain-Daware languages; in Wasida a different word, *bas*, is used; and, throughout the whole Orokaiva people, alternative names are *evobo* and *abiye*, or some nearly equivalent forms.

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778 It may safely be said that every clan has a *beratu*, and almost invariably it is some plant or tree. The Orokaiva are mostly forest people. In the tropical bush there is infinite variety, and (what makes the bush so difficult for the timber-getter and so easy for the native) this variety is for ever repeating itself. Give a native a moment and he will look about him and pluck you his *beratu*. The botanical names are of no consequence—fortunately so, as I cannot give them. There are large forest trees such as *Boruga* and *Siruga*, the 'canoe tree'; creepers and bushes; grasses and weeds. Sometimes they have an economic value; commonly they have none whatever. It is certain that they are not selected as *beratu* because of any use they may have. They are seen most frequently in the form of a twig or an unpretentious handful of grass.

Since the *beratu* is in so great a majority of cases a vegetable species, the phrase 'plant emblem' seems to be justified. There are, however, some interesting variants, including a number of bird associates and certain simple emblematic devices. Though I describe these somewhat in detail it must not be forgotten that they are relatively speaking a very small category, and that the *beratu* is normally a plant or tree.

In the Wasida tribe I came across three bird associates,

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*Kombu*, a certain black bird whose name '*Kombu*' is meant to reproduce its cry; *Hiviki*, the hawk; and *Hororo*, a small ground forager. These were all subsidiary emblems, and the clans to which they belonged had *beratu* of the ordinary botanic kind. Further, they were not, as far as I know, used for the regular purpose of the *beratu*, viz. as a badge or token of identity. However, among the Binandele there was the *Diriu*, or common blue pigeon, of the Diriu clan; and among the Tain-Daware the *Bangai*, or eagle hawk of the Bangai-unji; and it was claimed that the feathers of both these birds were used as identity marks. The blue pigeon (with a slight dialectal change of name) is again *beratu* of the Dirou about the Hydrographer foot-hills, but I have no very trustworthy note in this instance. Among several score of *beratu* I have lighted upon only these six instances of birds, so that they may be considered very rare.

A few examples may be given of the semi-mechanical devices which sometimes serve as *beratu*. Among the Aiga the Honia-Noduru clan use a split stick—not a particular stick, but simply any small branch torn from a tree by the track and split half-way down its length: The Samborota clan has for its *beratu* a *sambi*, i.e. a green stick flattened or squashed at the end as a wooden peg is splayed out by hammering. The Simborota, besides their plant emblem *Simboro*, have a habit of stamping their heel (*atu*) into the soft ground to leave the print of it as their mark. Among the Binandele we find *topo*, any broad leaf rolled into a spiral with the same quick turn of the hands which we see behind the grocer's counter; and *pono*, a foot or so of creeper fashioned into two tangent circles in imitation of the ornament *pono*, which consists of two circular pig tusks. The Umbengi clan of the Tain-Daware have for their *beratu* *umun-bengi*, literally 'water clod', i.e. the clod of earth continually dislodged by the stream from the river bank.

Further instances of this nature could be given. It will be seen that all these, like the usual plant *beratu*, have this much in common, that they may be extemporized in a moment. A native cannot lay hold of a bird or an animal whenever he wants it; consequently birds are rarely adopted

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as *beratu*, and animals or fish, so far as my investigations go, never.

It is common, almost regular, for the clan to have one or more alternative *beratu*. For this there are several explanations which may be regarded as concurrent. In the first place it is well to have an alternative or emergency *beratu*. If the tree *Tuvira* is not handy, then *Ebe jakara*, a grass stalk, will do; or failing that again *Komusu*, a leaf of any kind made into a scroll; and by one or the other of these you may know that a Serugahije man has passed.

Secondly, there is a sort of hierarchy of *beratu*. As was said before, the clan is continually subdividing. The sub-clan or incipient clan, even the individual, may adopt an independent *beratu*, but, still belonging to the parent body, continue for a time at least to use the parent *beratu*. Thus two branches of the clan Simborota, while retaining their original *beratu*, the river-grass *Simboro*, have each their distinctive mark, one the tree *Ominga*, and one *atu*, the imprint of a heel.

Thirdly, a man uses both the paternal and the maternal *beratu*. As I have previously mentioned, the *beratu* proper is the former, and the contrary instances which do occur are exceptional. The *beratu* of the father is passed on by inheritance, whereas that of the mother is not normally handed down beyond the generation of her offspring. However, so close is the intimacy between the two branches of the united family, that the son or daughter may be as familiar with the mother's *beratu* as with the father's. Within the clan, indeed, it is the distinctive mark of the household, and a man may often employ his father's and his mother's emblems simultaneously so as to make his identity the clearer. Further, as it is customary for a man to spend some of his time in his wife's village, it follows that the son must spend some of his time in his mother's village, and while there he may use his mother's *beratu* in preference to his father's, which would be less familiar among the surrounding villages and clans.

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*Uses of the Heratu*

(a) *As an Identity Token.* So far I have not mentioned the uses of the plant emblem. If one asks a native what he actually does with his *beratu*, he will assuredly answer: 'I place it on the track so that others who may follow may know I have passed that way.' This, indeed, though not the only use for the *beratu*, is the commonest. At the juncture of two paths I have come upon eight different kinds of leaves or grass, placed there during the morning and as yet scarcely wilted. My boys, who were inhabitants of the district, were able to identify each clan by its *beratu*; the owners of them had passed this spot at intervals, all bound for one village as guests to a feast and dance. The stem of the leaf, the root of the grass, or the butt of the branch, should point in the direction which its owner has taken, but apparently this rule is not observed with strictness.

There is another use similar in principle. When a hungry man sees a ripe bunch of bananas in the garden of his friend he will not hesitate to help himself. It is to be feared that he would not hesitate over long if he met the same temptation in the garden of a stranger. In the first instance, however, he will eat his fill of the bananas, or whatever it may be, and leave his *beratu*. When the owner comes to his garden and sees this, he will be satisfied, for no native grudges food to his friend.

I have had occasion myself to use this simple expedient. Finding a village where we meant to lunch deserted for the time, we steal a bunch of bananas, cook them, and go on our way with invigorated and cheerful carriers. To account for this act of pillage we need only leave a stick or two of tobacco by the remains of the banana bunch, tied to a sprig of croton, which happens to be the *beratu* of a rather distinguished old native who is with me. We may then feel that we have not only made payment but given the fullest possible account of our behaviour.

In these two uses the *beratu* is an identity token, having a sort of evidential value in proving presence or agency, like a national flag left planted on the North Pole, or a visiting

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202 card slipped under the front door. It may be remarked that the *beratu* is never worn or carried by a man simply as a badge. It is an identity mark *in absentia*.

(b) *As a Mark of Individual Abstinence.* The next use for the *beratu* is a somewhat singular one. It is used by individuals as a sign of abstinence, a sort of self-inflicted tabu, whenever such abstinence has been the outcome of some quarrel or grievance. The Orokaiva is very prone when his feelings are hurt to punish himself rather than the man who has hurt them; or, perhaps better, to take revenge upon the other party by punishing himself.

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517 Thus, if a man fall out with his wife, he will thrust a sprig of his *beratu* through his armlet, and while he continues to wear it will receive no food of her cooking. Not that he altogether starves himself into relenting; some friend will cook for him until his mood softens, and then there are interchanges of gifts between the wife's people and his own, and, as I am assured, invariable reconciliation. Similarly a wife who has been accused by her husband of sponging on him, not working for her keep, will advertise her grief and indignation by wearing her *beratu*, and will for the time being refuse to eat another taro out of his garden.

A bunch of drooping leaves may be seen tied to a coconut palm in the village. The owner has fallen out with his neighbour over the boundary of his garden. The row of tree-trunks which constitutes the usual garden border has been displaced and shows an encroaching and unwarrantable bulge. Therefore he has set up his *beratu* to indicate that he has been imposed upon, and has broken off friendly relations with his neighbour; he will accept no hospitality from him (and give none) until the matter has been adjusted. Another man nurses some resentment against a near-by village. If he were bidden to a feast there he would go, but with his *beratu* in his armlet; and when the wooden dish of savoury taro was placed before him, he would wave it aside, or lay his *beratu* upon the food to show that he could not accept the hospitality of those who had wronged him. Then the offender would be put to shame and punished, and be sorry for what he had done.

I. Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1930  
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(b) Coco-nuts stored under Tabu



(a) The Nalerari or Tabu Post

PLATE XXI

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614 (c) *As the Naterari or Village Tabu Post.* The *beratu* ap-  
 778 pears again in its most interesting character as the village  
 784 tabu post. In many parts of the Territory it is the custom  
 long before a feast to set up some tangible sign of tabu upon  
 the coco-nuts. Among the Orokaiva this sign commonly  
 takes the form of a wooden post or pillar, roughly carved  
 and painted, and this post should properly speaking be of  
 that particular wood which the clan owns for its *beratu*.  
 This, however, cannot be a universal rule, because the  
*beratu* is often a grass or some small plant; but it may be  
 said that when the *beratu* is a tree the tabu post is a stump of  
 that tree. (In the other cases it may be a post of some alterna-  
 tive wood, or—a frequent substitute—one or two wands of  
 the very light timber called *pamba* tied horizontally to a  
 palm.)

Among the Aiga such a post is called *naterari*, and this  
 word will be used as an alternative for tabu post. The  
*naterari* will be described more fully in Chapter XIII, but  
 I may here anticipate one or two points in that description  
 because they throw some light on the nature of the *beratu*.

614 In the first place the feast for which the *naterari* is set up  
 778 is a mortuary feast; it is in honour of, or placation of, cer-  
 784 tain departed spirits. Further, offerings are made to it as if  
 769 to the departed spirits; it is hung about with mementos of  
 the dead; the feast is laid out before it, and it is called upon  
 to witness the food; it is treated and disposed of with some-  
 thing like reverence; lastly, it often bears a faint and some-  
 times a decided anthropomorphic character. These various  
 points show that the *naterari* is closely associated with the  
 dead man, and they do much to justify the suggestion that  
 the wooden pillar actually represents the dead, or even that  
 it stood originally as a crude model.

*The Heratu as Ancestor*

614 Having described the uses of the *beratu* I may now en-  
 778 deavour to explain them. The fact of first importance is that  
 784 the *beratu* of the clan is constantly referred to as 'our an-  
 769 cestor'. The words used are *evobo* and *abijs*; the former  
 (which in this connexion is the usual one) seems always to

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614 have the extra connotation of 'ancient'; the latter may mean  
 778 either literally 'grandfather', or else an ancestor more remote.  
 ● It is always difficult to determine the proper limits of native  
 categories. *Heratu*, which I have used as synonymous with  
 plant-emblem, would seem with some informants to have  
 a rather more limited application, i.e. it refers to the plant  
 emblem especially *qua* mark of identity; whereas *evobo* is  
 rather a more comprehensive term, covering not only the  
 special plant-emblem ancestor, but the whole march-past  
 of forefathers. However, the plant-emblem is called an  
 [164] ancestor; and when a man is dead and lies awaiting burial,  
 the women may be heard crying to him as the offspring of  
 his *beratu*—'*Asava-jai, Hombiga-jai*' i.e. 'Child of Asava,  
 child of Hombiga!' the word *jai* being used in everyday  
 speech as we might use the word 'piccaninny'.

614 Now I have on a number of occasions asked the native  
 778 what he means by calling the plant emblem his ancestor.  
 551 Sometimes he cannot give an answer, but very commonly  
 he can, and then it is always the same: 'Our real ancestor',  
 he says, 'was a human being, not a tree; *it was a man with a  
 tree name.*' For once, I believe, our native has given the  
 really true explanation. I will proceed with the evidence for  
 this hypothesis, viz. that the normal *beratu* is a species of  
 plant representing a human ancestor of the same name.

There are certain reasonably authentic incidents in which  
 a human namesake, or rather original, of the *beratu* is well  
 remembered. Thus there is a Binandele clan named Yega-  
 boda whose *beratu* is *watora* the reed. During their latter  
 migrations these people hid from their enemies among the  
 reeds, and here a baby was born to whom was given, in a  
 very characteristic fashion, the name *Watora*. In due time  
 this child became the chief man of his clan, which adopted  
*watora*, or the reed, as its *beratu*. So again we find two widely  
 separated branches of the clan Samanahu, one among the  
 Aiga, the other, an emigrant section, among the Binandele.  
 The Aiga section, still retaining their name of Samanahu,  
 have now the alternative *beratu*, *asava* and *bombiga*, evidently  
 acquired subsequently; while the Binandele branch has kept  
 its original *beratu*, the tree *samana*. Both sections, however,

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told the same tale of Samana. He was their common ancestor—not a tree of course, they affirmed, but a man, and one who, as it chanced, acquired his name from the fact that he was brought to birth under a *samana* tree. 614  
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(It happens that in each of these two cases the ancestor has acquired his tree name in much the same way; and in fact this habit of naming a child from some odd circumstances attending its birth is very common; instance the names Abiga, 'Ashes', and Ijita, 'The Sun', given for precisely similar reasons. But whatever the origin of the tree names for human beings, I shall presently have to stress the fact of their extraordinary frequency among the Orokaiva.)

To give further instances, a man of the Aiga clan Johari, whose *beratu* is *saga*, declares that Saga was a man of flesh and bone, and gives with confidence a genealogy in which he proves to be his great-grandfather. Another, an old man with *beratu okomba*, says that he remembers seeing in his boyhood the real Okomba. In a certain village on the Kumusi the *beratu* is *juara*, a creeper. This will not make a suitable tabu post, so the chief, one Euga, cut out a post from the *euga* tree; and on another occasion used the tree *bananya*, because a paternal ancestor had borne that name.

Of individual *beratu* I shall have more to say presently; but an instance may be given here to show how the individual *beratu* also represents the human being with the tree name. The Pure clan on the Mambare has for its *beratu* the plant *pura*; but two individual clansmen possess *beratu* of their own, one the tree *goru*, from his paternal grandfather of the same name, and the other a pair of alternatives, *simbiri* (the croton), his mother's name, and *eua* (a kind of bread-fruit?), his father's name. Instances could be multiplied. From constant questioning I have come to form the opinion that in the very great majority of cases the *beratu* has been adopted in this manner, viz. as a tangible emblem of the synonymous ancestor.

I have four cases in which a contrary explanation was offered. A fugitive section of the Serugahiye clan, making its way northward toward the river Mambare, settled for some time in a place of abundant sago, and thereafter aban-

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614 doned the original *beratu twira*, and adopted *ambe*, or sago.  
 718 A clan of the Tain-Daware named Giriri had for its original  
 551 ancestor one Bono. But they were constantly using a certain  
 hardwood called *giriri* for building, and consequently took  
 this for their *beratu* and clan name. The Gonini clan of the  
 Tain-Daware have for their *beratu gonini*, and occupy four  
 villages. In one of these, Sivariri, there is growing a large  
 tree of the same name, and its inhabitants have taken this  
 species (*sivariri*) for their *beratu*. The fourth instance is that  
 of the Binandele clan Diriu. These people, who long ago  
 lived on the Kumusi, were fishing in a small creek when  
 the body of a blue pigeon (*diriu*) came floating down. They  
 accordingly named the creek Diriu, and, it would appear,  
 adopted the name for themselves and their *beratu*. Though  
 the clan was long ago driven out by the Aiga, this same creek  
 and the adjacent village are still known as Diriu, a circum-  
 stance which gives a colour of truth to the legend.

These four cases, however, are not typical. The usual  
 explanation is the one I have given above. In many cases,  
 of course, no explanation whatever was offered; yet it came  
 as a rather pleasant surprise to the investigator that the  
 natives should suggest as often as they did the same plausible  
 origin for one of their customs. After some acquaintance  
 with the Orokaiva, one may safely say that, although of a  
 highly imaginative nature, he is not such a fool as really  
 to believe himself descended from a tree.

*Identity of Clan, Heratu, and Ancestor*

We have now, therefore, reached this proposition: the  
*beratu* is both tree and ancestor, and it is so by virtue of the  
 circumstance that the name of the tree and the name of the  
 ancestor were identical.

Now I have already shown (Chapter VII, pp. 103 ff.) that  
 groups of men tend to take their collective names from the  
 individual names of their leaders, and that the clan name is  
 frequently that of its original leader or founder. There is  
 no need to elaborate that theme, but I may draw attention  
 to the facts (1) that clan names are very commonly tree  
 names, and (2) that very commonly the clan name and that

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of the *heratu* are identical, or the former incorporates the latter.

To illustrate these two points I give a list—fairly complete—of the clans of the Aiga tribe. The terminations of the clan names require a note. *Abije* means 'descendant'; *uhu* means literally and somewhat picturesquely 'the trunk of a tree', much as we should say 'stock'; *embo* means 'man'; *aba* may mean 'mother', as it does in one Orokaiva dialect (Hunjara), though not in that of the Aiga; *-ta* is simply an associative or possessive suffix.

(1) There is first a class of local names which more or less explain themselves.

| Clan Name.  | Meaning.                                                                                                                 | Heratu.                               |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Angerihani  | ( <i>angeri</i> means 'beyond, over yonder';<br><i>hani</i> may mean 'friends, comrades',<br>or possibly 'tree branch'.) | <i>Isuga, Soribo.</i>                 |
| Angerihu    |                                                                                                                          | <i>Potana, Hamana.</i>                |
| Autembo     | ( <i>auti</i> means the 'bush, forest'.)                                                                                 | <i>Saga.</i>                          |
| Poita-uhu   | (Poita, the name of a certain creek.)                                                                                    | <i>Boruga.<sup>1</sup></i>            |
| Seva-uhu    | ( <i>sewabi</i> , the 'bush'.)                                                                                           | <i>Siruga, Seki, and<br/>Tanderi.</i> |
| Tiri-Humusi | ( <i>tiri</i> , 'hills'; Humusi, the river Kumusi.)                                                                      | <i>Hambora, Ga-<br/>rava.</i>         |

(2) There is one solitary bird name of which I can give no explanation.

Jega-Karenga (*Jega*?; *Karenga*, parrot) . . . ?

(3) There is thirdly a miscellaneous class of names of which I have no explanation, but will put down only for the sake of making the list complete. These may be nicknames, ancestral names, or tree names.

| Clan Name.         | Heratu.                         |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Airahije . . . .   | <i>Horo.</i>                    |
| Ata . . . .        | ?                               |
| Evija . . . .      | <i>Isuga.</i>                   |
| Hocipahije . . . . | <i>Ongo.</i>                    |
| Jarutuhu . . . .   | <i>Embara, Kitikukumi, Ebi.</i> |
| Johari . . . .     | <i>Saga.</i>                    |
| Koariahije . . . . | <i>Tanderi.</i>                 |
| Komahije . . . .   | <i>Tutengi.</i>                 |
| Ngiriahije . . . . | <i>Boruga.<sup>1</sup></i>      |

<sup>1</sup> The same *heratu* may belong to apparently unrelated clans.

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551 (4) Lastly there is a long list in which the clan name is that of a tree or plant.

| Clan Name.             | Heratu.                                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Ango-uhu . . . . .     | ?                                                 |
| Aseahije . . . . .     | <i>Pogera, Ase.</i>                               |
| Borugaha . . . . .     | <i>Boruga.</i> <sup>1</sup>                       |
| Bove . . . . .         | <i>Simbiri.</i>                                   |
| Eugahu . . . . .       | <i>Euga?</i>                                      |
| Honia-Noduru . . . . . | ? (a split stick).                                |
| Hojavahije . . . . .   | <i>Hojava.</i>                                    |
| Isugahije . . . . .    | <i>Isuga.</i>                                     |
| Jautiahije . . . . .   | <i>Jauti.</i>                                     |
| Jega-Juaraha . . . . . | <i>Juara.</i>                                     |
| Koropahije . . . . .   | <i>Tutengi, Tambara.</i>                          |
| Ongoahije . . . . .    | <i>Ongo.</i>                                      |
| Paingoahije . . . . .  | <i>Paingo.</i>                                    |
| Samanahu . . . . .     | <i>Asava, Hombiga.</i>                            |
| Samberota . . . . .    | <i>Sambi</i> (a squashed stick).                  |
| Sauhu . . . . .        | <i>Sabu.</i>                                      |
| Seheo-Buje . . . . .   | <i>Buje.</i>                                      |
| Sekihu . . . . .       | <i>Seki.</i>                                      |
| Serugahije . . . . .   | <i>Tuwira, Ebe-jakara, Komusu.</i>                |
| Simborota . . . . .    | <i>Simboro, Ominga, Atu, Boruga.</i> <sup>1</sup> |
| Sorihije . . . . .     | <i>Soribo.</i>                                    |

If we exclude the third category, of which I have obtained no explanation, it will be seen that the last category contains the majority of the remaining names. And it will be seen also that in fifteen cases out of twenty-one, the clan's name, besides being that of a tree or plant, is that of the particular plant which is its emblem or *beratu*. In the typical instance, I believe, the names of clan and *beratu* correspond. And when we remember that the clan takes its name from its original leader or founder, it will appear that in the typical instance the names of the clan, the *beratu*, and the founder correspond.

On the whole I think the clan and its *beratu* come into being simultaneously and in this manner: an individual secedes from the parent clan and his family grows into an independent clan. This clan comes to be known by its founder's name and adopts for emblem a plant bearing the same name, or one similar to it.

<sup>1</sup> The same *beratu* may belong to apparently unrelated clans.

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The exceptions (i.e. where the clan name and *beratu* do not correspond) may be explained in several ways. (1) A sub-clan may retain the old *beratu* but take a new name. So the Autembo are a fugitive section of the Johari who took to the bush (*aute*) in order to avoid reprisals for a murder. While they are known as Autembo they have kept the original *beratu* of the Johari, viz. *Saga*. (2) A local branch of a clan may keep its original clan name but adopt a distinctive *beratu*. A migrant section of the Simborota still call themselves Simborota, but have assumed *Boruga* as their *beratu*. (3) A clan may discard the old *beratu* and take the synonymous plant of a new leader. Thus a very old man tells me his *beratu* was formerly *Tumena* (a variety of taro), but nowadays it is *Bari*, because his son *Barigi*, an ex-sergeant of Native Police (made famous by C. A. W. Monckton), has taken his place as leader of the clan.

*Plant Names for Human Beings*

I have mentioned (p. 97) the frequency with which plant names are used for human beings among the Orokaiva. It is time that this statement should be substantiated. In the first place we are dealing with a people of the forest, who depend on its products for countless purposes, and who know its multifarious flora in a way that no European could know it—unless he were a botanist. It need not altogether surprise us, therefore, that they should draw upon this inexhaustible store for their own personal names.

Name-giving customs have been dealt with already (Chapter VII, pp. 96-98). Suffice it to say here that, besides the formal names passed on by god-fathers and god-mothers (*tato*), there are countless nicknames (as we should call them) originating from some chance circumstance of birth or early youth. The formal names appear to be as odd as the others, and have no doubt arisen in the same haphazard manner. Most personal names permit of interpretation, and provided their owners or their owners' parents are present, the interpretation will often recall some homely anecdote of childhood. But, however they may have arisen, plant names form a large proportion of them. In a random list

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557 (two series of men who submitted themselves for physical measurement) we find such names as Half-cooked, Shell, Lizard, Pus, Cry-baby, to Stretch, to miss with the Spear, Wet, Roasted, and so on. But by far the largest category is that of plant names. In a list of 57 names (13 of which were not interpretable) they added up to 15, i.e. 26 per cent. of the whole, or 34 per cent. of the interpretable names.

*The Heratu as Badge*

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551 (a) *The Use of 'Nearly' Synonymous Heratu.* As only a proportion of men have actual plant names, it is obvious that not every one can have a synonymous *beratu*. There is, however, an important consideration which does much to remove this difficulty. Although a man may not have a plant name, nevertheless some plant with a name *resembling* his will be made to stand for him. The instance of the altered *beratu Bari* (p. 123) is a case in point. *Barigi*, as far as I know, is not the name of a plant; but *bari* is a sufficient approximation, and will do for the *beratu* of Barigi's clan. So we have *pura* as *beratu* for the clan Pure, and *anderi* for the clan Andere. Again for the clan Samberota (named from the plant *Sambero*) we have *sambi*, the flattened stick (vide p. 113).

(We even find a closely related variety of plant made to do service for the proper *beratu*, though it has an entirely different name. Thus the tree *benoma* may be a substitute for *samana* of the Samanahu (Binandele branch); *omba* for *Piri* of Piri-bijari; *pogera* for *ase* (both varieties of Job's Tears) of the Aseahije.)

What with the frequent occurrence of plant names and this convenient possibility of using as *beratu* a plant that is only nearly synonymous, it is almost impossible that any and every Orokaiva should not have his plant emblem.

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551 (b) *The Individual Heratu.* This brings us to the individual plant emblem, which has already been touched on here and there. The matter does not require a long consideration, for it will be obvious that the principle of the individual plant emblem will be precisely the same as that of the clan plant emblem; indeed, in all typical cases the latter has apparently come into being as an individual emblem. One

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sometimes finds a man living as a member of a clan and owning its *beratu*, but at the same time boasting a private sign for himself. We have seen a man, Euga of the Jega-Juaraha (*beratu juara*), setting up a *naterari* of euga wood (vide p. 119), and two members of the Pure clan distinguishing themselves by the synonymous plants of their grandparents or parents. Among the Binandele clan of Diriu is a man Taimi, who, besides the feather of the blue pigeon (*diriu*), has a *beratu* of his own, viz. *tai*, a root. No doubt the pigeon feather is not always at hand; but the root of any plant placed conspicuously on the track is enough to show his friends that Taimi has passed by.

(c) *Summary on the Heratu as a Badge.* It remains to say something more of the *beratu* as a badge or identity token, and lastly to discuss its bearing on the question of totemism. 778 551

Of the three main uses of the *beratu* previously described, viz. (1) as an identity token, (2) as a mark of individual abstinence, (3) as the *naterari*, or village tabu post, the last will seem tolerably clear. The *naterari* stands as a symbol of the dead man in whose behalf the tabu is imposed. Formerly it may have been something more than a formal symbol of the dead, in fact a crude image. This association between the wooden post and the dead man which it represents is strengthened by using his particular namesake tree: then, besides other associations, the two have this important bond between them—a common name. [202 201]

The second use remains somewhat obscure, though it has this in common with the *naterari*, that in both the *beratu* is really a tabu sign.

The first use, however, is the fundamental one. The *beratu* is a badge; and it is a badge by virtue of the fact that it bears the same name (or nearly the same name) as the man or men it represents. We may therefore call it a synonymous badge. A man named Waiwa once explained the matter to me thus. 'You white men', he said, 'have your books. If you went to your friend's garden and took his taro, you would write your name in the book, and when he came and saw your name there he would be content, knowing that his taro had been taken by a friend. But the New 778 202

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778 Guinea man cannot write his name on paper so he leaves his  
202 name behind him in another fashion. I should look about  
me', he said, 'and find some tree with a name like "Waiwa",  
break off a branch of it, and leave it by the broken taro tops.  
Then my friend, the owner of the garden, when he saw that  
sign, would say "Aha, Waiwa is welcome to my taro".'

721 In the article referred to elsewhere in this report, viz.  
778 'The Movements of the Tribes of the Mambare Division of  
202 Northern Papua' (Chinnery and Beaver), there is an inter-  
esting anecdote, still well remembered in the region of  
which it is told. The Binandele, led by a man Waia, had  
been raiding on the river Gira, and searching for their real  
enemies had in error attacked the Yema tribe, killed the  
chief, and captured a youth Jiani. For this unhappy mistake  
Waia expresses his sorrow, and desires that Kewatai, the  
absent son of the chief, be sent on a visit to the Binandele  
country in order to effect reconciliation and alliance.

"Then Waia said, "My name is Waia; can you remember  
this name?" Jiani replied, "Yes; we call this tree (pointing  
to a certain tree called Warawa in Binandele) Waia." The  
chief then cut off a piece of the bark, and gave it to Jiani for  
remembrance, and told him to put it in Kewatai's house,  
and to tell him that he (Waia) was sorry.'

When Kewatai does visit the Binandele country, it is only  
by remembering the name of Waia that he saves himself  
from being eaten.

In such uses as these the *beratu* is something more primi-  
tive than a pictograph; it is a very material symbol, a sort  
of vegetable signature.

*The Heratu as Totem*

614 Throughout this chapter I have avoided the word  
778 'totem', using in preference the non-committal, if awkward,  
phrase 'plant emblem'. I may now review the evidence  
which might have justified the use of the former term.

(1) The *beratu* is normally connected with a definite social  
group, viz. the clan (though sometimes with the individual  
and his immediate family).

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(2) The clan is usually exogamous in practice, though by no means strictly so (vide p. 131). 614  
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(3) The clan commonly, in the typical case always, takes its name from the *beratu* or, more strictly, is synonymous with the *beratu* (vide p. 122).

(4) The clan uses its *beratu* first and foremost as a badge.

(5) The *beratu* is called an ancestor (though the Orokaiva does not really believe that his ancestor can be plant or tree).

Thus far it would seem the *beratu* has conformed very nearly to the tenets of totemism. It remains to be considered whether the clan possesses any magico-religious sentiment for its *beratu* such as typically unites the group and its totem.

The evidence is here somewhat conflicting. Generally speaking the plant emblem (except as *naterari*) is treated with no semblance of respect or reverence. In clearing the bush a man will fell his *beratu* tree without a thought; if it bear edible fruit like *topu*, the wild fig, he will eat it; if it be, as in one case it is, *ambe* or sago, he will not forswear one of his principal means of subsistence. There is a large clan, the *Umondaba*, one of whose *beratu* is nothing more nor less than 'Water'.

In one or two instances, however, informants have claimed that they will not cut down their own tree; though such are distinctly exceptional. No case has come to light of a useful *beratu* which its owner will not use. With the rare bird *beratu* the case is almost the same. A *Diriu* man, ex-constable, averred that he had shot many *diriu* (blue pigeon) for his master, and would be only too glad to shoot and eat another if I would lend him a gun. Perhaps at first he was like the other who 'sighed as a member of the cockatoo totem but obeyed as a policeman', but his scruples are long since gone if he ever had any. A man whose subsidiary *beratu* is the bird *Kombu* says that, while he would not hesitate to kill it (if he could get near it), he would still refrain from eating it. It is apparently for reasons of sentiment alone that he would not eat it, for he declares there would be no evil effects upon him if he did (as I believe he might) yield to the temptation. 614  
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778  
784 On the other hand, however, a man of the Bangai-unji, or 'children of the eagle-hawk', who use one of its speckled feathers for their mark, avers that he would neither kill nor eat the bird; and, further, volunteers that if a *bangai* fledgling, being caught and kept in the village, were to die, it would not be eaten or thrown away, but buried. Lastly, there is one isolated note which may have some significance. The bird *Hororo* (mentioned on p. 113) belongs especially to a certain man Erupa. Should its cry be heard near the village, the people would say, 'Erupa will be successful in the hunt to-day'.

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778 In passing I may mention a point of some interest. Among the Orokaiva there are certain strict rules of etiquette between relatives by marriage (particularly between the man and his parents-in-law), exemplified by a very strict name-avoidance. Now, although a man will cut down his own *beratu* tree without mercy, he will hesitate to do the same with a tree that happens to bear the name of his *atovo* or *imboti*, i.e. his father-in-law or his mother-in-law, and may request one of his companions in the clearing to fell this particular tree for him. Similarly he will not eat any food, animal or vegetable, which happens to be synonymous with either of his parents-in-law. Now this rule is based on sentiment; there are, as far as my knowledge goes, no magico-religious sanctions to it; and where a similar taboo is observed with regard to the *beratu* we may probably assume that this is likewise no more than a sentimental avoidance.

778 The foregoing evidence has been set down for what it is worth. On the whole there would appear to be no very special regard for the *beratu*, though here and there will crop up a strong manifestation of such regard. It may not be surprising that this is relatively more marked in the few cases of birds than in those of the usual botanic *beratu*, because the former, with their more definite personality, are in themselves likelier objects of regard than the latter.

In fine it is of little consequence whether the plant emblem be called a totem or not; it will be obvious that it is very much like one. There is in my own mind little doubt as to how the system came into being. The *beratu* is a synony-

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mous badge for the leader of the clan, and through him for the group to which he gives his name. It has been maintained that totemism was evolved in more ways than one. More thorough-going totems may well enough have sprung, like the plant emblems of the Orokaiva, not from communal nicknames, but from names, and furthermore, from individual names. The conclusion of the present chapter may be summarized very briefly. The clan's *beratu* originates from the individual *beratu* of its leader or ancestor; and the individual *beratu* is some plant which serves as a token of identity because it bears the name of its owner.

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## CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

765 paraphernalia connected with the dead are ceremonially and  
 535 finally disposed of. On the other hand, the dance and drama  
 536 have their own intrinsic value as forms of art and amusement, and, furthermore, they commonly occur in connexion with the initiation and seclusion of a number of youths and girls.

765 The whole subject of dance and drama, however, will be  
 784 discussed in the next chapter. In the meantime I shall deal  
 788 with the tabu upon the food-supply which precedes the fourth stage, and which makes possible the large feast which is perhaps the most important feature of the proceedings in so far as they are of a mourning nature. The mark of this tabu is the *naterari* or tabu post, which has already been referred to in Chapter VIII, p. 117. As we saw there, it usually takes the form of a rough-hewn pillar or post, standing a few feet high in the open space of the village. Properly speaking it is made of the *beratu* wood of the clan; but when the *beratu* is not of a suitably solid nature the *naterari* may consist merely of a piece of light timber called *pamba* tied to the butt of a palm, or perhaps to a croton bush. *Na* means 'village', and *terari* 'to close up', as a creek is dammed up with stones, or as the hollow drum is closed at one end with the lizard skin. The Binandele word is *ao*, apparently a contraction of *ago* (another dialectal form): I cannot make any suggestion as to its real meaning. In Wasida the same object is called *itembari*, probably a compound of *i*, 'tree', and *tembari*, 'to place on top'. In Doboduru the word was *natembabije*: *na*, 'village', *temba*, 'to place on top', *abije*, 'ancestor'.

Some months after the man's death the *naterari* is set up in the centre of the village, and from this moment the coconuts are not eaten green but allowed to ripen and fall, until at last there is a tremendous accumulation, perhaps laid out in lines on the ground or else piled on a mountainous tripod. Meanwhile the *naterari* has been standing in the village clearing as if silently watching the slow preparations, somewhat weatherbeaten by now, and with its originally garish make-up a little faded. It is, however, treated with a certain amount of care and respect. It is not uncommon to see a

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miniature four-legged shelter to protect it from the rain, with a gabled roof of sago thatch, and perhaps underneath the roof a little platform. On this platform may be found an old bamboo cylinder pipe, a lime gourd, perhaps a handful of withered betel-nuts; and besides these a few fragments—fresh or mouldy—of cooked taro. These are so placed for the spirit of the departed, or, to use the Aiga word, the *sovai*. It will come by night and refresh itself to that extent which is proper for a spirit, or as a native will say, with a twinkle in his eye, taking no more than an ant might eat. In addition to these offerings, there may be found certain mementoes of the deceased—an old banana-seed necklace, a shell bracelet, in one case a broken gourd that had been a urinary for an invalid and bed-ridden old man.

When the preparations for the entertainment are complete the *naterari* is removed, and with its removal the coconut tabu comes to an end. Normally, it would appear, the *naterari* stands through the time of feasting and is removed afterwards. Sometimes, I am told, the provisions for the feast are displayed before the post—row upon row of wooden dishes piled with cooked food—and it is called upon to witness the feast in its honour.

There is still something of reverence in the final disposal of the *naterari*. When I suggested chopping it up for fire-wood I was made to feel that this was rather a bad joke. In the inland village it was put aside in the outskirts of the bush, sometimes with a small platform close by for a continuation of the food offerings, and there allowed to decay. On the river Opi it is placed, with other paraphernalia of the dance, upon a raft; with some little ceremony this raft is guided into midstream and released to follow its unattended course toward the sea. Sometimes the *naterari* is stowed away in a house. At any rate it is not simply thrown away and disregarded. For this two reasons are given: first, that the *sovai* or spirit would be angry; second, that the people feel too sorrowful to treat the *naterari* thus.

It is worth referring to the forms or patterns of the tabu post. The variety is very great, for each example seems to

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765 take shape from the individual carver's imagination. There  
 778 is no such thing as a distinctive clan device; and there are  
 532 no names for particular patterns. In one village a newly  
 erected *naterari* of an unusually pretentious character had  
 been recently substituted for another of inferior workman-  
 ship. The latter, though discarded, had not been destroyed.  
 Both belonged to the same clan and village and were set up  
 for the same occasion, but they were wholly different in  
 pattern and appearance.

The treatments range from the very simplest of formal  
 designs to somewhat elaborate representations of the human  
 figure. The latter probably throw some light upon the  
 former. For instance, the prevalent device of cutting  
 through the post so as to leave two separate supports may  
 be reminiscent of the obviously human-like legs of more  
 elaborate figures. There are many *naterari* which apparently  
 do not conform to the implied explanation, but nevertheless  
 it may be said that many do show a slight, and others an  
 unmistakable, anthropomorphic character. The sketches  
 (Fig. 25) were made at various times and entirely at  
 random.

Enough has been said to show that the *naterari* is very  
 closely associated with the dead man for whom the feast  
 is to be made. I do not remember hearing in so many words  
 that the *naterari* actually represented such and such a dead  
 man; but, if I may repeat what was written in Chapter VIII,  
 the fact that the feast is definitely made for the dead man,  
 the care with which the *naterari* is treated, the offerings made  
 to it, the mementoes of the deceased which are attached to  
 it, and the ceremonious way in which it is finally disposed of,  
 would all lend colour to the suggestion that it is regarded  
 as a representative of the dead and is in imagination identified  
 with him. One could not go so far as to say that it was  
 actually an image of him; but in view of its occasionally  
 striking anthropomorphism, it is not impossible that origi-  
 nally the *naterari* was in reality set up as a crude model of the  
 dead. I may give one illustration to show that this idea, or  
 a similar one, has not been entirely forgotten. In one  
 sketch primitively painted on one facet of a post, may be

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seen the figure of a man. The *naterari* was cut out, set up, and painted by one Bararipa, pending a feast in honour of his deceased father Komona; and the figure, by Bararipa's word, was a picture of Komona himself.

A further bond between the *naterari* and the dead resides in the fact that the tabu post is normally formed of the particular wood which is his plant emblem, and hence is likely to be his clan namesake.

The most interesting point in regard to the *naterari* is the fact that food offerings are made to it. Of this subject I shall speak at greater length when we discuss the belief in survival after death. In the meantime I may give an account of the dance and drama which have at least some significance as ceremonies of mourning.


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FIG. 25. Examples of *Naterari*, or Tabu Posts

## THE TARO CULT

775 crocodile, cuscus, fire-fly, for example—which haunts the bush, and is regarded as dangerous and, on the whole, abominable, but which must not be offended. It is not necessary to deal at any length with this subject of animal reincarnation, which is not relevant to the matter in hand. The spirit of the dead manifests itself in other ways. It may visit the village unseen by human eye; or it may come and stand over the sleeper in his dreams, speak to him, and leave objects of a very tangible nature by his side.

769 The practical aspect of the old-time Orokaiva religion is largely a placation of the spirits of the dead. It is in the  
775 garden that the good results become evident; consequently we find—quite apart from the new cult of Taro—a number of rites or observances which are intended to ensure, through the medium of the spirits of the dead, a greater output in the gardens. The more striking of these observances may be enumerated. In the villages  
• [778] are to be seen the *karan*, or offertory platforms (sometimes with a miniature ladder from the ground which is meant to facilitate the spirit's access to the morsels of decaying food which have been left for it). At the feast and dance the spirit of the dead man in whose honour they are performed is called upon to be present and partake. When a man dies his spirit, accompanied by numerous others, is known sometimes to return almost immediately to his garden to play havoc with the taro in a sort of huff; and, indeed, it is a practice to lie in wait for these ghostly vandals, in the hope that they may be overheard discussing the sorcerer who brought about the death and so permit of identification and revenge. Again, for some reason which was never satisfactorily explained, the garden of the deceased is taboo to his nearest relatives: they fear some malign influence of the  
769 spirit upon the vegetables. Lastly, at the actual burial,  
775 some old man will stand by the corpse as it lies before the  
764 open grave, and pressing with his foot upon that of the dead man as if to secure his attention will cry out,

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be somewhat later in starting work, but they do their share. There are very few slackers in an Orokaiva village. As has been indicated, there is no effective division of labour in the garden save that between the sexes, and, to a less extent, that between old and young. There are incipient traces of trades and special vocations among the Orokaiva, but in gardening there is virtually no such differentiation. Every man, unless he be aged or a cripple, has his own garden, and he and his wife and children support themselves. [463]

Sometimes the whole clan will co-operate. This is seen especially when a move is made and work begun on a new area. Sometimes by invitation another village will come to assist in these initial operations. This is the nearest approach that the Orokaiva makes to the African working bee. Passing at noon through the village of Ohoraburari—so named because the 'dance of the rooster' was once performed there—we see the women already busy, and a great array of black pots on the fires. A little farther and we come to the new garden clearing, where we find at work the whole population, men and women, of a neighbouring village, Totoimaburari, 'the dance of Totoima', the legendary mankiller. Working with them are a few of the Ohoraburari people—such as are not more interested in helping prepare the feast for their paying guests. 241 476 618

The work proceeds steadily, but with little system. There is nothing like a drive, or a rank of men moving forward and working abreast; but rather a number of scattered individuals, engaged in a somewhat aimless and leisurely kind of dibbling. On the edge of the garden is a platform, shoulder high, with a miniature ladder from the ground. This is the *baran*, or *ba gaga*, the platform on which offerings are set for the spirits of the dead, who govern the taro crop; and the ladder is intended in some manner to facilitate their access to the offerings. On this occasion the *baran* is hung about with tufts of the brilliant feathers which make up the Orokaiva head- 241 476 [778] 769

155 threatening that she would never again let him come to her breast. But as a rule  
862 the biting lesson seems to be learned easily, and mothers appear to have very little trouble with children biting them during the prolonged lactation.

155 The second conflict situation is the one induced by the adult men deliberately  
866 provoking fright in the small boy. The boy has to grow up to be fearless. Before the pacification of the Orokaiva and the surrounding tribes, this was part of the training of boys to be warriors. Ultimately, after being frightened by the men quite frequently over a couple of years or so, the boy is no longer afraid. But, in the meantime, his world is uncertain and conflicting. He learns to keep close to his father, so that he can rush to him if someone frightens him, and this association with his father continues long after he overcomes his fear of strange men making strange noises. It does not seem to occur to the child to run for comfort in these circumstances to his mother.

#### *Initiation into Adulthood.*

881 The initiatory rites are clearly divided into three major parts—the terror, the seclusion and the investiture. The initiation of a girl does not encompass all of these.  
[783] At puberty she is secluded for a time, and then goes through a little purificatory ritual before ceremonially emerging from her seclusion. She does not have to endure the terror.

What I have termed "the terror" is what F. E. Williams refers to as the "initiation ceremony proper."<sup>8</sup> After being secluded for a short time, the candidates emerge and are shown the bullroarers and sacred flutes. Then the *embahi* (malevolent spirits) appear to them by moonlight and chase them around the village. The boys' parents cry out to the spirits to spare their children and not to devour them, but the *embahi* rush around crying out, "Kambo, kambo, kambo!" (Bite, bite, bite!). The boys are well aware that the *embahi* are a sham, and that they are really only fellow-villagers in disguise, but they are terrified none the less. Eventually, the *embahi* allow the boys' parents to overpower them and chase them from the village.

After they have undergone the "terror," the boys are secluded in the *oro* ("men's house"). "... During this period, they are instructed to be honest, obliging and diligent." They learn to play the flutes, and they plait armlets; otherwise they are inactive. Food is served to them by some old men. The boy's *nobo* (mother's brother), who has appeared as one of the *embahi* then returns to the village, divested of his frightening make-up, to lead the boy to the *oro* for his seclusion, and is responsible for feeding him during this period.

[583] The final phase of the initiation is the boy's emergence from his seclusion. Like  
665 the girl on her emergence, he goes through a purificatory ritual. Then he is fitted with the *kokumbari* (feather headdresses), the wearing of which is a demonstration of his manhood. Again, it is the *nobo* (mother's brother) who presents him with the

<sup>8</sup> Orokaiva Society, p. 180, also pp. 181-192.

## FIVE NEW RELIGIOUS CULTS IN BRITISH NEW GUINEA.

E. W. P. CHINNERY, F.R.A.I., AND  
A. C. HADDON, Sc.D., F.R.S.

### I.

E. W. P. CHINNERY.

668 I HAVE recently been engaged in observing the origin of two religious cults known as "Kava-Keva" and "Kekesi." They are animistic practices that, notwithstanding their prohibition, have already become powerful, and extend from the Gira River (8° S. lat.) to Buna Bay.<sup>1</sup>

769 The belief in ghosts and spirits is a predominant char-  
774 acteristic of the northern native. In almost every tribe I have observed the propitiation of family ghosts with individual offerings of food by ordinary persons to secure the vitality of their food supply, and by sorcerers to stimulate their charms. Ghosts are invoked during ceremonies by divination to reveal crimes and criminals. Food offerings to ghosts are made during death feasts and during certain initiation rites. The house of initiation and the paraphernalia of the dance are believed to have spiritual powers, and when the paraphernalia are thrown into the river at the completion of the rites, they are invoked to smite the enemies of the dancers.

776 Yet, although the spirits and ghosts are legion, I had  
666 nowhere come across any conception of a supreme spirit until  
178 the outbreak of the Kava-Keva<sup>2</sup> movement, when the villages

[131] <sup>1</sup> It may be well to note that the Gira River opens at about 8° S. lat. on the north coast of British New Guinea, and that the mouth of the Maniba River is four miles to the south, both being in the Mambare Division. Buna is on the south of Holnicote (Gona) Bay, about 8° 37' S. lat., and is in the Kumusi Division. Keroro, Mount Victory, is an active volcano, nearly 5000 feet in height, a little to the west of Cape Nelson, which is about 9° S. lat.

[152] <sup>2</sup> "Kava-Keva" is a Motuan word which is used extensively throughout the tribes of British New Guinea by adoption to express a condition of inaction or irresponsibility either temporary or permanent.